



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Let Your Voice Be Heard on State Priorities

By Representative Don Vruwink

Every two years, the Governor proposes a budget that serves as a fiscal roadmap for the state. The budget establishes funding for all state agencies, programs and initiatives. Developing and enacting the state budget is a months-long process that culminates in hours of debate on the floor of the state Assembly and Senate.

Gov. Walker introduced the \$76 billion budget on February 8 and now the Legislature, the press, interest groups, and individual citizens are going over it with a fine-toothed comb. This is no small task because the budget is close to 1,000 pages.

After the budget is introduced, it goes to the Joint Finance Committee, which modifies, deletes, and adds budget provisions. Because Republicans hold a majority in both houses, they also hold a 12-4 majority on the committee. Once the amended document receives a final vote in committee, it goes to the Legislature where it is again amended. Both houses must approve the same version of the budget bill before it is signed into law by the Governor.

Wisconsin is one of 44 states that gives the Governor some form of line-item veto power. In Wisconsin, the governor can strike entire sections, as well as specific sentences, words, numbers, and even individual letters. Sometimes these vetoes are minor and correct oversights by the Legislature. But vetoes can also make significant changes. The Legislature may attempt to override the Governor's vetoes. Eventually, the budget bill is signed into law and is in effect for the next two years.

Before all of these things take place, citizens have the chance to participate in the process by calling or writing their representatives and senators to voice support or opposition to specific budget provisions. The Joint Finance Committee is hitting the road to hold public hearings across Wisconsin. This is another opportunity to make your voice heard. Here are the three public hearings closest to my Assembly district:

Monday, April 3, 10 am – 5 pm

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

Ullsvick Hall

30 South Hickory Street, Platteville

Wednesday, April 5, 10 am – 6 pm

State Fair Park – Exposition Center
8200 West Greenfield Avenue, West Allis

Friday, April 7, 10 am – 5 pm
Berlin High School Auditorium
222 Memorial Drive, Berlin

Democrats will hold four additional public hearings. These will be in Green Bay, Eau Claire, Dodgeville and Wausau. For details on dates and locations, please call my office or send me an email.

Legislators appreciate hearing how budget provisions affect individuals personally. In that spirit, I welcome your comments on anything related to the budget – what is included and what is not.

If you would like more information about the state budget or assistance with preparing to testify at a public hearing, please contact my office via phone (608) 266-3790 or email at Rep.Vruwink@legis.wi.gov. As always, my staff and I are happy to assist you.

Rep. Don Vruwink represents the communities of Whitewater, Milton, Edgerton, Footville, part of the Village of Oregon, and several townships.

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